

EDWARD BAKER (Eddie Lincoln) DRAWER 2

LINCOLN CHILDREN

71 2004 OF 5 09365

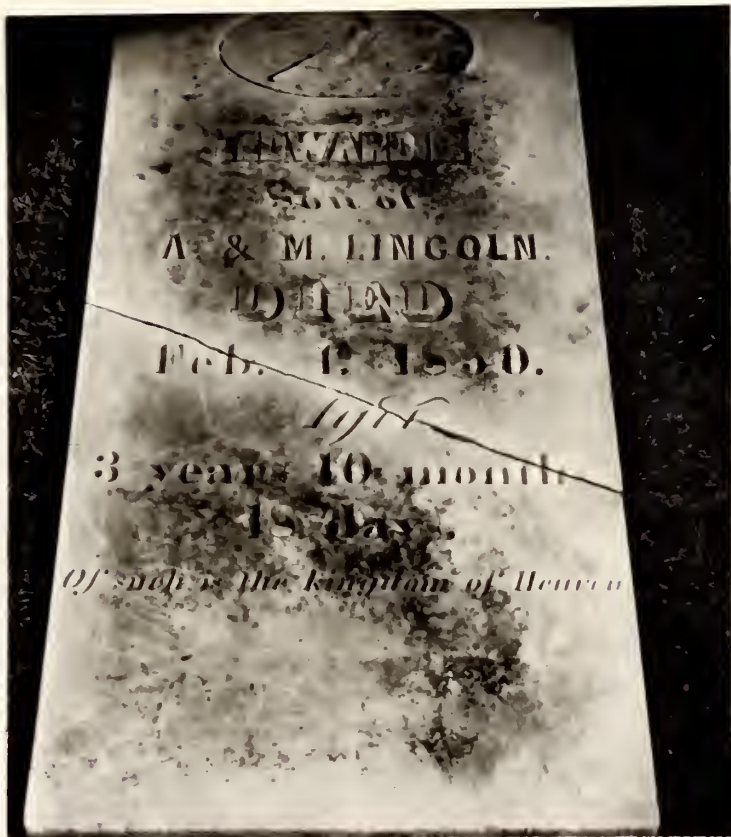
The Lincoln Children

Edward Baker Lincoln

Excerpts from newspapers and other sources

From the files of the
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection





SD1-SPRINGFIELD, ILL. SEPT 9. LOST TOMBSTONE FOUND--The tombstone of Eddie Lincoln, Abraham Lincoln's second son, has been located after 89 years in Oak Ridge Cemetery here. The stone slab measuring 24 by 48 inches was used as a stepping stone for the burial plot of former Governor Ninian Wirt Edwards and his descendants. (AP WIREPHOTO) RB 12:30pcdt BR) 54

1954

THE GRAVE OF EDDIE LINCOLN

Carl Sandburg, in the first volume of his poet's biography of Abraham Lincoln, recalls the tragic day in February, 1850, when the future President "for the first time held in his arms the white, still body of a child of his own." The boy was his second son, a little less than four years old and named after his old friend Edward Baker—the same Baker who eleven years later was to fall in the battle of Ball's Bluff. Had Eddie Lincoln lived he would have been as old as some of the boys who fought on either side during the great war that was to come.

But Eddie Lincoln was to know nothing of the war or of the greatness that waited for his father. For Eddie Lincoln, scraps of whose baby talk are remembered across all these years and who had a tenderness for stray kittens, Lincoln was only a tender and loving father, a great, tall man who could lift him halfway to the sky.

Eddie Lincoln died and was buried more than a century ago. Sandburg tells us that a friendship grew up between Mary and Abraham Lincoln and the Rev. James Smith, who preached the funeral sermon. No doubt the little boy's death deepened the sadness that was always in Lincoln's heart. Why does this story

come back to us now? Because the long-lost slab bearing the inscription that was over the boy's grave has been found in Oak Ridge Cemetery at Springfield. It was lying face down near the burial lot of Gov. Ninian Edwards—a beloved contemporary of the Lincolns and a lifelong friend of Mary Lincoln after the President's death. Of such small tragedies, as of the larger ones, history is made up. It may well have been that the deaths of Eddie Lincoln and of the brave man for whom Eddie was named entered into the immortal cadences of the Gettysburg Address and the Second Inaugural.

Sept 10 1954
New York Times

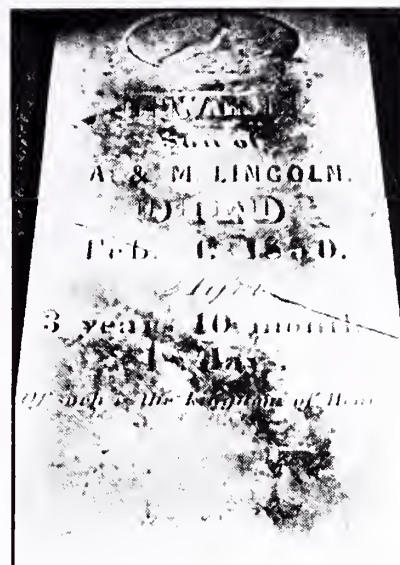
Tragedy: New Find in Lincolniana

The tombstone, a white marble slab, lay face down, broken in two, for decades a steppingstone to the burial plot of Ninian Edwards, first governor of Illinois territory, in Oak Ridge Cemetery, near Springfield.

The inscription on the hidden face of the slab simply noted that it had once marked the grave of "Edward B., son of A. & M. Lincoln," who had died on Feb. 1, 1850, at the age of 3 years 10 months 18 days. "Of such is the kingdom of Heaven."

The stone had marked a tragic milestone in the tragic life of Abraham Lincoln. Ten years before the tall, stoop-shouldered, tired-faced man became President he had looked down for the last time at the still body of his second son, Edward Baker Lincoln—a small, gentle boy whose love of kittens is still remembered. They laid Eddie Lincoln to rest in Hutchinson's cemetery, but the body was later moved to lie at Oak Ridge beside his father.

The original tombstone, useless



Associated Press

then, was turned over to the Edwards family by Mary Todd Lincoln. Last week, after a long search by state officials, the long "lost" tombstone was discovered.

Newsweek, September 20, 1954

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green streak

FEB. 10, 1967

TIMES-DEMOCRAT

AMUSEMENTS • TELEVISION

A New Legend In Lincoln Land

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. — Nothing short of an electronically operated computer could come within throwing distance of how many words have been written about Abraham Lincoln. However, a new discovery has come to light this year through research by Dr. Wayne C. Temple, Associate Archivist under Secretary of State Paul Powell.

Dr. Temple's discovery is the record of Lincoln's purchase of a broken stone destined for the new Governor's Mansion. The purchase was made from Governor Joel Matteson on August 9, 1854 and the price was \$5.75.

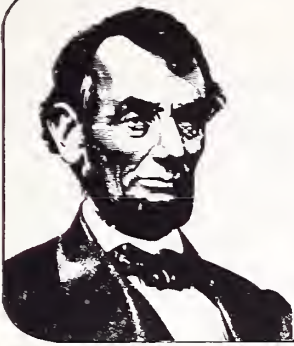
The stone which marked the grave of Lincoln's second son, Edward Baker Lincoln, is now in the Historical Library at Springfield in the Centennial Building. It is of limestone, not marble as previously reported.

Little Eddy died in Springfield, Feb. 1, 1850 just short of his fourth birthday. He was buried in Hutchinson Cemetery, a timbered knoll eight blocks west of the Springfield square the present site of Springfield High School.

In 1854 the present Governor's Mansion was being built. The going price of tombstones at the time was in the neighborhood of \$30 to \$40.

It is in the realm of speculation, of course, and Lincoln scholars may argue the point, but there is evidence that Lincoln was sometimes dilatory, probably more through pain than neglect and he may have taken four years to have placed a stone in memory of his second son, marking the boy's exit from this world, as he was undoubtedly deterred by grief from ever marking his own father's grave in Coles County, Ill.





Lincoln Lore

March, 1976

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Number 1657

Lincoln and "Civil Religion"

Abraham Lincoln's religion was once a subject of burning controversy among most Lincoln students. Richard N. Current gave the subject its last notable consideration by an academic historian in 1958 (in his chapter entitled "The Instrument of God" in *The Lincoln Nobody Knows*). Since then, churchmen, theologians, and professional students of religion have claimed the field that historians have aban-

doned. Far and away the most capable work produced since 1958 is William J. Wolf's *The Almost Chosen People: A Study of the Religion of Abraham Lincoln*, published in 1959 and reissued as *The Religion of Abraham Lincoln* in 1963 and as *Lincoln's Religion* in 1970. Wolf, a professor at the Episcopal Theological School, wrote a balanced account that deserves its popularity. Since then, however, the studies of Lincoln's



FIGURE 1. "A Communion Gathering in the Olden Time" is an illustration from *Presbyterian Reunion: A Memorial Volume, 1837-1871* (New York: De Witt C. Lent, 1870). It is suggestive of the norm of American religious experience in Abraham Lincoln's day. Even the restrained Presbyterians held religious services out of doors, away from an institutional church. And one can see that the single minister seems almost inadequate for the masses present.

From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

religion have become increasingly didactic, championing Lincoln as "the chief theologian of civil religion" that America reputedly needs now. Elton Trueblood's *Abraham Lincoln: Theologian of American Anguish*, published in 1973, is the most widely noted of these recent attempts to find in Lincoln a model for a twentieth-century theology.

A word about this twentieth-century theology, "civil religion," is in order. It is a loose liberal theology which says that the nation in its history must be informed by some spiritual role. As a liberal theology, it conceives of spirituality as embodied in part in social morality. As Herbert Richardson says in "Civil Religion in Theological Perspective" (in Russell E. Richey and Donald G. Jones, eds., *American Civil Religion* [New York: Harper and Row, 1974]), "The concept 'civil religion' unites two terms: the civil order and the religious order." It is broadly ecumenical and therefore rather uninstitutional, unchurchly, and anti-creedal. It is historically oriented and conceives of revelation as a gradual historical development. A recent critic of civil religion (and of Abraham Lincoln as theologian or prophet of the religion), Melvin B. Endy, Jr., of the Religion Department at Hamilton College, terms it "simply . . . the mythic belief that the United States is a latter-day chosen nation that has been brought into existence and providentially guided as a fundamentally new social order to serve uniquely as a 'city on a hill' for the rest of mankind."

Abraham Lincoln is an important prophet in this scheme for several reasons, not the least of which is that he never too closely identified this nation's purposes at any one time with God's will. Champions of civil religion fear just what its critics harp on as its dangerous weakness: it might lead to an intolerant belief that this nation state can do no wrong. The Civil War President's famed expression of concern "that I and

this nation should be on the Lord's side" in response to a clergyman's question whether "the Lord was on our side" becomes a crucial episode for the advocates of civil religion. (In truth, this quotation is known to us only through the second-hand recollections of painter Francis Bicknell Carpenter, *Six Months in the White House* [New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1866], page 282.) Another major document, of course, is the Second Inaugural Address with its forgiving pledge of "malice towards none; . . . charity for all." Thus Lincoln strived to make the war a moral crusade against the social evil of slavery without ever assuming that God's purpose was so clear that the opposition had to be seen strictly as malevolent forces of Satan's darkness. "His patriotism," says Trueblood, "was of such magnitude that it cannot easily be exaggerated, but it was never idolatrous, and it was saved from idolatry by the overwhelming sense of the sovereignty of God" (page 118).

Once Lincoln's Christian statesmanship is so interpreted, it is easy to fit the rest of his life into a scheme which nicely fits the demands of civil religion. His own personal faith developed historically and slowly through periods of anguished doubt and uncertainty about the divine will. "One of the important features of Lincoln's theology" as Trueblood describes it, was "that it was a *development*." Lincoln's "spiritual pilgrimage" led from "theological positions of his early manhood" to mature ones which had "little in common" with the earlier ones. In fact, he probably went through a stage in which he was the village skeptic:

In his effort to reach a rational theology, Lincoln as a young man had very little real help. There was no church at New Salem, and few of his neighbors cared greatly about ideas. Though the deep sense of reverence which had developed in the Indiana forest seems never to have left the young man, he began to speculate in ways which made some people think of him as verging on infidelity. Certainly he was influenced for a time by the amateur philosophizing of his pioneer neighbors, as he revolted against the ignorant preaching which he heard from time to time. As a young boy in Indiana, he had enjoyed mimicking the hell-fire and brimstone preachers of the raw frontier.

Lincoln argued, for a time, a belief in what he called the "Doctrine of Necessity," what we would call determinism today.

In 1841, Lincoln and Mary Todd temporarily broke off their engagement to be married. Lincoln was thrown into such a slough of despond that he neglected his duties as a legislator and went to visit his old friend Joshua Speed in Kentucky. Speed's mother-in-law gave Lincoln a new Bible, and Lincoln said of it in a letter, ". . . I intend to read it regularly when I return home. I doubt not that it is really, as she says, the best cure for the 'Blues' could one but take it according to the truth." Twenty years later in the White House, Lincoln still remembered the gift of the Bible. Most historians mark this date, 1841, as a time when Lincoln began to have a renewed awareness of the Revealed Word.

The next step in his spiritual pilgrimage was a new awareness of the Word as it came from preachers. In 1850, Lincoln's three-year-old son Edward Baker died after a fifty-two day illness. Mary Lincoln was so shaken that she joined Springfield's First Presbyterian Church, the pastor of which, Dr. James Smith, consoled her and preached the sermon at her son's funeral. Her husband did not join, but he began to attend services more regularly, as is evidenced by his renting a pew in Dr. Smith's church.

The years of the Civil War were the last big step in Lincoln's pilgrimage. It was a time so suffused with a sense of crisis and great moral questions that it is difficult to focus on specific events in the way one can in Lincoln's earlier life. Nevertheless, one date does seem to stand out in all accounts, February 20, 1862. On that day, Lincoln's eleven-year-old son William Wallace died. Mrs. Lincoln, who had herself been severely shaken by the domestic tragedy, recalled later, in re-



Courtesy Illinois State Historical Library

FIGURE 2. Dr. James Smith was the minister of the First Presbyterian Church in Springfield from 1849 to 1856. President Lincoln remembered the family's consolers and appointed him Consul to Dundee, Scotland.



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

FIGURE 3. The First Presbyterian Church of Springfield, Illinois, had as a full-fledged member Mary Todd Lincoln. Abraham Lincoln rented a pew there and heard some of Dr. Smith's sermons.

gard to Lincoln's religion, "He first seemed to think about the subject when our boy Willie died, and then more than ever about the time he went to Gettysburg." (Mrs. Lincoln admitted, incidentally, that her husband was "never a technical Christian.") Mary Todd Lincoln could not herself completely sort out the discrete events of that blurred period of daily crises, and she seems to have linked his religious development somewhat with the Gettysburg Address. But she did recall that there was an abrupt change (it was the "first" time he thought about it) after Willie's death.

Thus Lincoln's religion, never orthodox but increasingly profound, developed fully in time, the civil religionists tell us, to inform the most important actions of his Christian statesmanship, especially, of course, the Emancipation Proclamation, decided on as a policy by Lincoln in the summer of 1862.

Religious writers are now much too sophisticated to fall for the myriad of unreliable stories of secret promises made to clergymen days before his death that Lincoln was to convert and become a full-fledged member of some church or other. They listen to what the historians tell them were the facts of Lincoln's religious life and attempt merely to interpret them in their own way. They seem in a great haste, though, to master the facts and move on to the important didactic work at hand. Unfortunately, the Lincoln story deserves a more leisurely examination, the sort of examination which does not wrench the man from his historical context but carefully measures him against the events and culture of his own times.

In his haste to fit Lincoln into his theological scheme, Trueblood has failed to fit Lincoln into the historic surroundings of Lincoln's own life. There was a sort of American civil religion that was being championed in Lincoln's own time, and he was notably impervious to its appeal. In fact, there was an attempt to found a specifically religious party in American politics in

the 1850's, the American or Know Nothing party. Informed by an impatient reforming zeal to take a stand on issues which the established Whig and Democratic parties avoided, the Americans waged campaigns to lengthen the period of naturalization for immigrants to twenty-one years (the same time it took a native-born American to gain the franchise), to exclude foreign-born citizens from holding public office, and, above all else, to keep the Catholic Church from receiving public money for parochial schools. The public schools of Lincoln's day required Bible reading and supplied the Bible used by Protestants for the purpose. Catholics used a different Bible and reasoned that their tax dollars ought not to go to the purpose of changing their sons and daughters into Protestants. The issue stirred hatred and political excitement as only public school issues can in American political history.

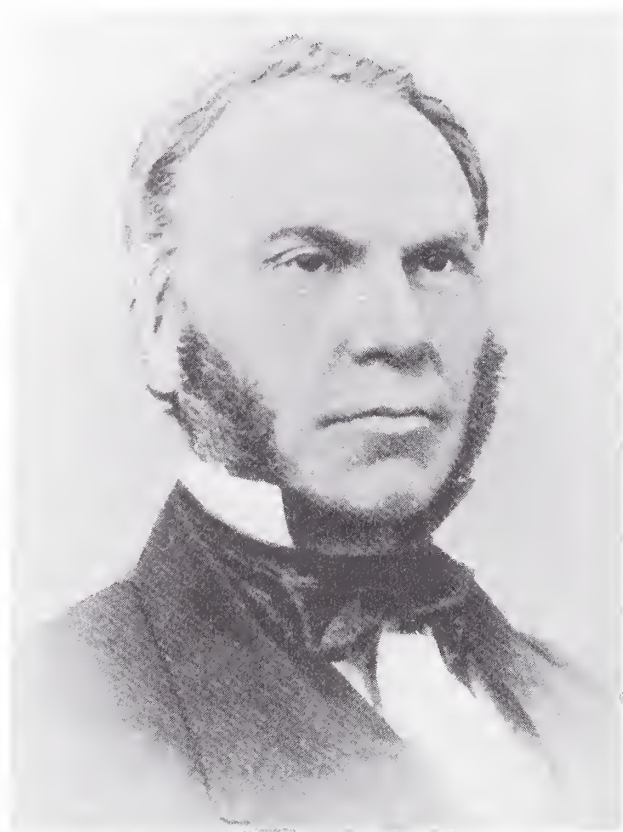
Although Know Nothingism did not measure up to the standards of today's ecumenism, it was at least a nonsectarian movement. It required cooperation among all the differing Protestant sects to the end of halting what was viewed as the Roman menace to American civil liberties. The chief complaint against the Roman Catholic Church was that it did not believe in separation of church and state nor in freedom of thought and expression, two fundamental aspects of American political identity. Complaints about specific religious interpretations of, say, the Eucharist did not find their way into the political literature.

That Lincoln was never tempted by the Know Nothings is common knowledge. That the temptation must have been very great is not so commonly acknowledged. Lincoln told Owen Lovejoy on August 11, 1855, that the Know Nothings in Springfield "are mostly my old political and personal friends; and I have hoped their organization would die out without the painful necessity of my taking an open stand against them." The Know Nothing enthusiasm even infected Lincoln's own home. In 1856, he cast his fortunes with the Republicans and John Charles Frémont. The Americans and Whig remnants also had a candidate in the field, Millard Fillmore, and, had there been female suffrage in that day, Mrs. Lincoln would have voted for a different candidate from her husband. Writing to her sister Emilie Todd Helm on November 23, 1856, Mrs. Lincoln discussed the recent election:

Your Husband, I believe, like some of the rest of ours, has a great taste for politics & has taken much interest, in the late contest, which has resulted very much as I expected, not hoped—

Altho' Mr L- is, or was a *Fremont* man, you must not include him with so many of those, who belong to *that party*, an *Abolitionist*. . . . My weak woman's heart was too Southern in feeling, to sympathise with any but Fillmore, I have always been a great admirer of his, he made so good a President & is so just a man & feels the *necessity* of keeping foreigners, within bounds. If some of you Kentuckians, had to deal with the "wild Irish," as we housekeepers are sometimes called upon to do, the south would certainly elect Mr Fillmore next time[.]

Lincoln's religion was exempt from the anti-Catholic animus which was a norm of American Protestantism in that pre-ecumenical era. In fact, Lincoln's religion was for the most part unlike that of most Americans in his day. The other great aspect of antebellum Protestantism was evangelicalism, enthusiastic revivalism. Indeed, the two great forces were closely related. The original impulse for revivalism in the two decades after 1800 had fed, in some part, off the fear of the Catholic menace in the West. And both phenomena were aspects of enthusiastic religion. There was no cool rationalism in the barks, jerks, laughing exercises, singing exercises, anxious benches, prayers of faith, and sermons from the heart which gave this era of American religious history, known as the Second Great Awakening, its distinctive cast. And there was no cool rationalism in the Know Nothing



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

FIGURE 4. The Reverend Phineas D. Gurley ministered to Lincoln's spiritual needs while he was President. He conducted Willie's funeral service and delivered the funeral address at the White House after Abraham Lincoln's death.

movement, which Michael F. Holt has described as "the politics of impatience." By contrast, Lincoln's religion was notably quiet, private, and rationalistic rather than enthusiastic in tone.

Now doubtless the civil religionists' answer to this would be that I have just pointed out all the reasons that Abraham Lincoln is the superior prophet of American civil religion. They argue that a civil religion is inevitable. Therefore, they would simply say that Lincoln's is the superior version of civil religion, uniting morality and statecraft without uniting specific religious institutions and the state. In fact, Elton Trueblood finds just these traits to be the superior ones in Lincoln's religious example: (1) He never joined a church because no creed was completely satisfactory. (2) His religion needed no ministers and no institutional church; it was a religion that relied on the Bible and private prayer and a careful and humble reading of the Divine Plan as revealed gradually in the workings of the American electorate. There was no embarrassing fundamentalist enthusiasm about Lincoln's dignified calls for national days of fasting and thanksgiving during the Civil War. (Mr. Trueblood, incidentally, is a Quaker, and his own religion has never required preachers or an institutional church.)

It is unfair and unhistorical to suggest by this that Lincoln was superior to his benighted age and that his more restrained religious experience looked forward to a better day when passionate emotionalism would wither and religion would be more dignified, more sophisticated, and less the result of crude mechanical contrivances like the anxious bench. Actually, the norm of religious experience in Lincoln's own day was increasingly anti-creedal (in that it stressed the role of the heart in conversion over the role of any intellectual assent to

systematic doctrine enunciated in theological sermons). It was also anti-churchly. Revivals took place in camps and fields and tents, not within the confines of an institutional church presided over by an established minister. Lincoln's religion thus resembled the religion of his day in *unessential* matters; it was different in the essential one, the personal form of expressing religious passion. Many Americans did it by falling on the ground or at least by professing a changed heart. Lincoln expressed it in musings on the mysterious workings of the Divine Will and apparently by increasing private reading of the Bible and increased attention to religious teaching by ministers.

The civil religionists were so happy to find in Lincoln's spiritual pilgrimage a gradual development or growth that flowered finally in those war years of terrible passion that they failed to note the most obvious aspect of it: *it was always utterly private and personal.*

All of the major landmarks of Lincoln's religious history were events which had absolutely nothing to do with civil society, the state, the nation, politics, moral reform, or the general public. He found the Bible as a cure for deep personal depression caused by the break up of his romance with Mary Todd. He first rented a pew in a church when he experienced the death of an infant son. He took his first interest in religion large enough for his wife to perceive it when he lost another young son to death in 1862. Mrs. Lincoln said his interest *increased* at the time of the Gettysburg Address, but she said it was triggered by Willie's death. It seems wrongheaded to try to found a *civil* religion on a prophet who was utterly *private* in his own religious experience. The civil religionists use Lincoln's example to inspire a form of religion which did not move Abraham Lincoln himself.



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

FIGURE 5. The New York Avenue Presbyterian Church was Phineas Gurley's pulpit. The church now contains chimes and bells that were gifts of Robert Todd Lincoln and Mary Lincoln Isham, son and granddaughter of Abraham Lincoln.

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"Of such is the kingdom of heaven" The mystery of "Little Eddie"

Emerson, Jason

Note: part of the discussion in this article considers the spelling of Eddie's name: E-d-d-i-e versus E-d-d-y. For purposes of continuity and clarity, I have chosen to spell all my references to him in the spelling of the title of the poem itself: E-d-d-i-e, but in letters and other quotations I have left the name as the original author spelled it.

The story of the death of four-year-old Edward Baker Lincoln, affectionately called "Little Eddie" by his parents, is a tragedy familiar to most people with a passing knowledge of Abraham Lincoln. It is a heart-breaking story of a perpetually sickly child whose immature immune system could not withstand the onslaught of tuberculosis. It is the first tragedy in a continuous line of tragedies and premature deaths in the family of Abraham Lincoln. Yet Eddie's death was greater than simple death; it marked the beginning of two distinct periods: for Mary and Abraham Lincoln, it began a period of religious and worldly reflection, and the humbling of certain vanities; for modern Lincoln scholars and enthusiasts, it was the beginning of a mystery.

It was the beginning of a mystery that has received nominal attention in the Lincoln scholarly world. It is a literary mystery, a mystery of composition and poetry, perhaps a mystery considered only by enthusiasts who combine Lincoln and linguistics. It began five days after the burial of Edward Lincoln, in the form of an unsigned poem published in the Illinois Daily Journal:

(by Request)

Little Eddie

Those midnight stars are sadly dimmed,

That late so brilliantly shown,

And the crimson tinge from cheek and lip,

With the heart's warm life has flown

The angel of Death was hovering nigh,

And the lovely boy was called to die.

The silken waves of his glossy hair

Lie still over his marble brow,

And the pallid lip and pearly cheek

The presence of Death avow.

Pure little bud in kindness given,

In mercy taken to bloom in heaven.

Happier far is the angel child

With the harp and the crown of gold,

Who warbles now at the savior's feet

The glories to us untold.

Eddie, sweet blossom of heavenly love,

Dwells in the spirit-world above.

Angel boy, fare thee well, farewell

Sweet Eddie, we bid thee adieu!

Affection's wail cannot reach thee now,

Deep though it be, and true.

Bright is the home to him now given,

For, "of such is the kingdom of Heaven."

Who wrote that poem? While this may seem a small, some may say insignificant, mystery concerning a tiny portion of the life of our sixteenth president, it is still an interesting conundrum that any student of Lincoln's literary legacy must wonder about. For the question must be asked: if Lincoln wrote this poem, how would it fit into the context of his other poems; likewise, how would it fit into the context of the full body of his literary achievements? If Lincoln did not write this poem, was it his wife who did? Before one seeks to deliver a definitive answer to this subject, one must first ask which of the two seems the more plausible author.

Could Lincoln have written the poem? He definitely could have. Yet, "Little Eddie" does not appear in any editions of Lincoln's collected works, not even as an unsubstantiated possibility in a footnote. Could Mary Lincoln have written the poem? She never refers to it in any of her existing letters. Could someone else, a close family friend, have written the poem? Nobody ever claimed credit for its composition, either publicly or privately as far as is known.

There is no mention of the poem in the several hundred reminiscences of Lincoln gathered by William Herndon, or in the biographies based on that material.

Of the few Lincoln scholars who have considered this question, none has offered more than slight possibilities or innuendoes. These historians generally do agree, though, that either Mary or Abraham wrote the poem, mainly because the last line, "of such is the kingdom of Heaven," is engraved on Eddie's tombstone. Other, more specific, reasons for assigning authorship to either Mary or Abraham are rare. Most opinions tend to lean toward Abraham, and have simple and weak foundations, the most common resembling a statement made by historian Harry Pratt: "These twenty-four lines [of the poem 'Little Eddie'] are in the mood of Lincoln's favorite poem 'Mortality' by William Knox . . . Thus it may not be unreasonable to believe that Lincoln composed 'Little Eddie.'"² This explanation does not convince; yet neither does Jean H. Baker's assertion that "Little Eddie" was "A mother's production."³ It is not the endeavor of this essay to commit to a belief of either Abraham or Mary as the author of the poem; rather, this is a consideration of the possibilities as to how the poem was created and who seems the most plausible author.

Could Lincoln have written "Little Eddie"? He could have. We do know that he wrote poetry. Lincoln's main poetic attempt, "My Childhood Home I See Again," was written in 1846, the year in which Eddie was born. It was originally composed as one long poem in four cantos,

though it is now generally divided and considered as three separate poems.⁴ Lincoln also wrote a few short poems for the daughters of a friend, and one piece about General Robert E. Lee.⁵ Yet the style of "Little Eddie" does not seem to be in harmony with his other poetic works.⁶ Of course this does not mean that Lincoln could not have experimented with a different style, or could not have been divinely inspired as Socrates claimed all poets were, but important differences remain. Lincoln wrote all of his other poems, and imbued most of his speeches, with an iambic meter (stemming no doubt from his love of William Shakespeare and Robert Burns, among other poets).⁷ "Little Eddie" is far from strictly iambic:

The sil' / ken waves' / of his gloss' / y hair'

Lie still' / o ver' / his mar' / ble brow',

And the pal' / lid lip' / and pearl' / y cheek'

The pres' / ence of Death' / a vow'.

Pure / lit tle bud' / in kind' / ness giv'en,

In mer' / cy tak' / en to bloom' / in heav'en.

In fact, the scansion of the stanzas is erratic and haphazard. The form of the poem is conscious of rhyme and emotion only, no thought was given to metrics.⁸ This was very untypical of Abraham Lincoln, given the background of his literary tastes, his previous poems, and his meticulous literary style.

In Lincoln's main poetic attempt, "My Childhood Home I See Again," and in his short pieces to Linnie and Rosa Haggard, his rhyme scheme is abab, while "Little Eddie" rhymes abcbdd.⁹ Of course, he could have simply attempted a different scheme for the poem; most poets will agree that form is organic, dictating itself as the ideas flow, an extension of content to which the poet simply complies. Yet considering that every other poem Lincoln wrote had the same simple scheme, and that Lincoln was quite a novice as a poet, the possibility of such a revolution of style at such a traumatic time seems unlikely.

Jean H. Baker denies Lincoln's authorship in her book *Mary Todd Lincoln: A Biography*, by saying "[Lincoln's] necrology ran to less mawkish poetry, such as Thomas Gray's 'Elegy' and William Knox's 'Oh, Why Should the Spirit of Mortal Be Proud?'"¹⁰ Ironically, Lincoln's love for Knox's poem, and the similarity in mood between it and the Eddie poem, is usually attributed as a reason for Lincoln's authorship of "Little Eddie," not against it.¹¹ Yet the similarity in mood between two poems really proves nothing. In the nineteenth century, as today, there was a dominant school of poetry and poetic thought (Victorian, Romantic, Wordsworthian poetry of a very somber and contemplative nature) that influenced all lovers of poetry, either consciously or unconsciously. The presentation of a similarity in mood between two poems is therefore a weak point, yet this is one of the historic arguments in favor of Lincoln as the writer of the Eddie poem. Likewise, just what is considered "mawkish" by some is an arbitrary thing, not to mention specific to time and culture, so to discount Lincoln on the basis of a particular poem he admired is a bit insular. Losing a four-year-old son seems a strong possible impetus to deflect an otherwise deep writer into a state of "mawkishness."

Baker makes other interesting points against Lincoln as the author of the poem. One simple fact is the spelling of Eddie's name in the poem: E-d-d-i-e. Baker states that Lincoln spelled his son's name E-d-d-y, and she seems to suggest that Mary did not, hence the "-ie" spelling of the name in the poem, and Mary's attributable authorship.

Lincoln did spell his son's name with a "y." As he wrote to Mary from Washington during his single Congressional term, "Your second and third letters have been received since I wrote before. Dear Eddy thinks father is 'gone tapila' [gone to the capitol building] ... I went yesterday to hunt the little plaid stockings, as you wished; but found that McKnight has quit business, and Allen had not a single pair of the description you give, and only one plaid pair of any sort that I thought would fit 'Eddy's dear little feet I did not get rid of the impression of that foolish dream about dear Bobby till I got your letter written the same day. What did he and Eddy think of the little letters father sent them? Dont let the blessed fellows forget father."¹²

Yet it seems that Mary also spelled her son's name with a "y." In *Mary Todd Lincoln: Her Life and Letters*, there are only two letters where Mary actually writes her son's name. In a letter to her husband she wrote:

"Uncle S[amuel Todd] was to leave there [Springfield] on yesterday for Ky Our little Eddy, has recovered from his spell of sickness Dear boy. I must tell you a story about him Bobby in his wanderings to day, came across in a yard, a little kitten, your hobby, he says he asked a man for it, he brought it triumphantly to the house, so soon as Eddy, spied it his tenderness, broke forth, he made them bring it water, fed it with bread himself, with his own dear hands, he was a delighted little creature over it, in the midst of his happiness Ma came in, she you must know disliked the whole cat race, I thought in a very unfeeling manner, she ordered the servant near, to throw it out, which, of course, was done, Ed- screaming & protesting loudly against the procceding, she never appeared to mind his screams, which were long and loud I assure you . . ."13

In a letter to Dr. James Smith, the Presbyterian minister who preached at Eddie's funeral, Mary refers to her long deceased son as "Edward."14

Perhaps a piece of this lexical confusion can be attributed to a story told by Emilie Helm, Mary's half sister. Helm recounts the story of staying with the Lincolns in the White House in 1863. Mary was still deeply distraught over the death of her third son, Willie; and she apparently told her cousin that she would often see her dead boy in her room: "He comes to me every night, and stands at the foot of my bed with the same sweet, adorable smile he has always had; he does not always come alone; little Eddie is sometimes with him."15 Here we see Eddie's name spelled E-d-d-i-e; but this was written by Katherine Helm, from the recollection of her mother Emilie, of a conversation she had had with Mary Lincoln. Obviously the spelling of Eddie without a "y" was Katherine Helm's particular spelling, not Mary's. So if neither of the Lincolns spelled their son's name E-d-di-e, and if one of them wrote the poem, it is strange that the name is not spelled with a "y" in the newspaper.

Of course the spelling of a name is not a substantial point of argument. The proper spelling for the nickname could have been to end it with "-ie" and the Lincolns' spelling of it was their own peculiar, ungrammatical spelling; the newspaper editor could have changed the original spelling, believing the proper spelling to be Ed-d-i-e; or the typesetter for the *Daily Journal* could have misset the type. One never knows what kind of mistakes could happen in publishing, or what the prerogatives of an editor may be.

Perhaps the most important consideration in the refutation of Abraham as the author of "Little Eddie" is, again according to Jean H. Baker, the sense of maternity that imbues the poem, the feminine language and maternal endearments such as "sweet Eddie," "pure little bud," "angel child," and "angel boy." Also, an argument could be made that Mary described in the poem what she had seen as she sat by the bedside of the dying boy: the "crimson tinge," the "pallid lip and pearly cheek." Yet Lincoln could also have sat by the bedside of Eddie; he would have seen these same conditions, and therefore may have been moved to write about what he had seen. Also, while the "maternal endearments" listed above do seem to modern sensibilities to be very maternal, men could have also used those adjectives and nouns together. The "angel child" and "angel boy" phrases are particularly interesting in that Lincoln did use language like that at other times. According to Lincoln's close friend Joshua Speed, Lincoln always referred to Nancy Hanks Lincoln as his angel mother, partly because he loved her and partly to discern between she who was dead (like Eddie when the poem was written) and Lincoln's stepmother, Sarah Bush Johnston Lincoln, who was alive.16

Another aspect of the poem "Little Eddie" that argues against Abraham as author is the blatant use of religious allusions in the text: the "angel of Death," "In mercy taken to bloom in heaven," "angel child / With the harp and the crown of gold, / Who warbles now at the savior's feet," "Angel boy," and of course the last line "For 'of such is the kingdom of heaven.'" That last line is from the New Testament of the Bible, Mark 10:14. In context, according to the King James version, it reads:

13. And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them.

14. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.

15. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.

At this time in his life, Lincoln was not an overly religious man. He did not go to church regularly, and he declared himself as a member of no particular denomination, being dissuaded by their forms and dogmas. In fact, this absence of church membership was the reason that he was assailed as an infidel and an "open scoffer at Christianity" in the 1846 Congressional race. Lincoln replied to these charges in a circulated handbill in which he stated, "That I am not a member of any Christian Church, is true; but I have never denied the truth of the Scriptures; and I have never spoken with intentional disrespect of religion in general, or of any denominations of Christians in particular... I do not think I could myself, be brought to support a man for office, whom I knew to be an open enemy of, and scoffer at, religion."¹⁷

While Lincoln was not an "open scoffer at religion," it was not until after Eddie's death that he found a place in himself for religious reflection. In 1870 Mary wrote to her friend Dr. James Smith concerning William Herndon's biography of Lincoln, and the biographer's labeling of Lincoln as a disbeliever. She defended her husband as a "true Christian gentleman," saying "From the time of the death of our little Edward, I believe my husband's heart was directed towards religion."¹⁸

It was due to Dr. Smith that Lincoln's heart bent towards the divine. When Eddie died, Smith visited the Lincolns at their home, where it seems the Lincolns befriended him quickly.¹⁹ Dr. Smith spoke at Eddie's funeral, and his words seemed to have comforted the grieving parents somewhat, enough so that Mary joined his congregation, and Lincoln paid rent on the family pew for the next ten years before their move to Washington. Though Lincoln himself did not join the congregation, he became very interested in the religious views of Dr. Smith. He began speaking to the Reverend frequently, and read his book, *The Christian's Defense*, which examined, point by point, the objections of skeptics against the Bible. Being a religious skeptic as a young man, and sharing a law office with a vehement atheist, these views interested Lincoln deeply.

But all of this came after Eddie died, after the funeral, after the sorrow and the grieving and the dark nights of reflection. It therefore seems unlikely that, given Lincoln's lack of religious involvement at this time, had he written the poem, so many religious allusions and overtones would have been present. Yet, despite all these religious probabilities against Lincoln's authorship, does a person/poet need to be religious in order to write a religious piece? Nineteenth century mourning was a devoutly Christian undertaking, and it could conceivably be fitting and proper to write a requiem with religious language, even if one were not religious oneself. Nineteenth century America was an extremely religious place; the Lincolns were most definitely not the only parents to engrave a quotation from the Bible (even that particular quotation) on a tombstone. Thus its presence does not necessarily denote a religious mind - perhaps only a religious society.

Amid all these refutations of Abraham, one of the strongest claims for his authorship should be considered: he could handle the loss and pain of death; Mary could not. Abraham was not without emotion, indeed, the loss of Eddie devastated him, but he could still function, and he had his law practice to distract his distraught mind. Perhaps Lincoln wrote the poem as a comfort to Mary, or as a gift: a kind of vicarious catharsis for his emotionally crippled wife. This could explain the feminine voice of the poem: Lincoln used Mary's voice to make the poem more personal for her, more poignant, more connective to her own emotions. This would not have been the first time Lincoln assumed a female voice in his writing. He once wrote a political satire for the *Sangamo Journal* in which he assumed the voice of "Rebecca," a semi-literate backwoods woman from "Lost Townships."²⁰

Perhaps Mary tried to write the poem and could not; Lincoln may then have stepped in to write what his wife could not express. This is possible, for Mary could not handle the loss of a loved one. She once wrote to her friend Mercy Ann Levering, "To me it has ever appeared that those whose presence was the sunlight of my heart have departed separated far and wide, to meet when?"²¹ In context, this statement meant childhood friends dispersed by time and fate, but the disturbing prescience of those words is haunting.

When Mary was four years old her baby brother died. At six and a half her mother died in childbirth. Mary's father, Robert Todd, loved her deeply, but he remarried in less than a year. Robert Todd's new wife had nine children of her own, so the lives of her step-children seemed to be secondary; meanwhile business, politics, and a new family occupied Mary's father's time. Whenever Mary had conflicts with her step-mother, or whenever she needed to just get away and find some understanding, she went to visit her maternal grandmother, Elizabeth Porter Parker, who lived near the Todd home. Grandmother Parker shared Mary's distaste for Robert Todd's new wife.

Mary's emotional state being as fragile as it was, it is understandable that Eddie's death affected her so deeply. By the time her boy died Mary probably had little strength or endurance left: in July 1849 Robert Todd died in a cholera epidemic which swept Lexington; at the end of that year, in the midst of Eddie's fatal sickness, Grandmother Parker died as well; then in February of 1850, Eddie passed away. Considering

Mary's fragility at the presence of death, this horrible succession of events was crippling. When Eddie died she stayed in bed, unwilling to eat or drink. According to the reminiscences of a neighbor, Lincoln allowed her to mourn for a while but finally had to plead "Eat, Mary, for we must live."²²

Considering how emotionally distressed she was, could Mary muster the strength of mind after Eddie's death to compose a poem? Perhaps she could; perhaps her prostration and her utter grieving led her mind to seek an outlet for her grief; maybe writing "Little Eddie" in tribute and farewell to her beloved boy was a powerful catharsis for her tortured soul. This is likely, for Mary loved poetry, ever since she was a child. Mary's cousin, Margaret Stuart Woodrow, wrote, "[Mary's] love for poetry, which she was forever reciting, was the cause of many a jest among her friends. Page after page of classic poetry she could recite and liked nothing better."²³ Mary had twelve years of schooling, so it is not inconceivable that she garnered a love of language and literature, which created her love for poetry and recitation, that moved her to occasionally write in verse.

If Mary did write poetry, none has ever been found in her letters, even scraps or doggerel. The only possible poetry composed by her (that still exists) was written in 1842 in the "Lost Townships" letters. Lincoln admitted to writing the second letter, while Mary and her friend Julia Jayne are believed to have written the last piece, which was accompanied by a poem signed with the pseudonym "Cathleen."²⁴

The answer to Mary's lack of poetic output could be quite simple. During the Springfield years, Mary was a 19th century housewife married to a politically ambitious lawyer who was away from home months at a time. The sheer volume of housework and raising children would put a strain, if not a block, on many creative endeavors. But if Mary did write poetry, where did it disappear to? Perhaps Robert Lincoln, Mary's son and executor, burned what he may have considered trite little rhymes of his mother's along with the many other Lincoln family papers he is believed to have burned.

Even without the physical evidence which would prove that Mary wrote verse, there are certain aspects of the poem "Little Eddie" that do lend themselves to the possibility of her authorship: her love for poetry, the feminine language, the maternal endearments, and the religious allusions throughout the work (she being a much more religious person than her husband before Eddie's death). Yet Lincoln has his possibilities of authorship as well. We have proof that he wrote poetry; he loved melancholy poetry; while not religious, he was not a stranger to religion; and he seems to have had the strength of spirit to withstand the pain and loss of death. It can hardly be proved from such reasoning either that Abraham or Mary did or did not write the poem. Yet there is a third possibility: maybe the Lincolns wrote the poem together. Maybe Mary began it and was not able to complete the painful reminder that her boy was gone, so Lincoln finished it for her. If so, perhaps he purposely used maternal endearments and feminine language to continue her sense of voice.

Finally there is the possibility that neither Mary, nor Lincoln, nor both in collaboration wrote the poem. Maybe it was written by someone close to the Lincolns, someone who had been around the Lincoln home often. There were other women who would have helped Mary care for Eddie during his illness: her sisters Mrs. Edwards and Mrs. Wallace, both Springfield neighbors; perhaps the neighbor Mrs. Sprigg or her daughter Julia. These would explain the feminine voice, the maternal endearments, and the first-hand observations. Yet if a neighbor or family member wrote the poem, why did nobody claim credit for it? Considering that the death of a child is a major trauma in a family's life, the fact that no one ever came forward and said "I wrote a poem for Lincoln's dead son" has to make one wonder; such an assertion of solicited authorship would secure a place in at least one biography of Lincoln.

So the question remains: should "Little Eddie" be included in the Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln? Is it a valuable witness to the growth of Lincoln's literary abilities? "Little Eddie" could have been a poem written simply to mollify the pain of a loved one's death, and nothing more. Does Mary seem like the poet? The piece could have been a catharsis for her overwhelming grief. Mary may have recalled the scene of the dead boy lying in bed, bestowing her maternal endearments on him one last time before they put him in the ground. Could someone else have written the poem, such as one of Mary's sisters or a neighborhood friend? After reviewing all the possibilities, one might conclude that without further evidence, it may never be discovered who wrote the poem. But perhaps the consideration of this mystery is more important than its solution, for such a consideration more clearly elucidates the impact the death of Eddie had on the lives of Mary and Abraham Lincoln.

Notes

1 Illinois Daily Journal, 7 February 1850.

2 Harry Pratt. "Little Eddie Lincoln, We Miss Him Very Much," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 47 (1954), 300. A similar, though more general, thesis was offered by Ruth Painter Randall: "Perhaps Abraham or Mary wrote the verses. The quotation in the last line seems to have been comforting thought to them; at least they chose it for the inscription on the white marble tombstone that was placed at Eddie's grave." *Lincoln's Sons* (Boston/Toronto: Little, Brown, and Company, 1955), 29.

3 Jean H. Baker. *Mary Todd Lincoln: A Biography* (New York/London: W.W. Norton & Co., 1987), 126.

4 For the original long poem see Roy P. Basler, ed., Dolores Pratt and Lloyd A. Dunlap, asst. eds., *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, 9 vols. (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1953-55), 1: 367-370 (hereafter cited as CM; the three separated cantos are generally titled as "My Childhood Home I See Again" (1: 378379), "The Maniac" (1: 384-386, 382), and "The Bear Hunt" (1: 367n, 386-389). No fourth canto has ever been found. Lincoln may never have completed his poem, for as he wrote to his friend Andrew Johnston in the letter accompanying the original twenty-five stanza version: "How would you like to see a piece of poetry of my own making? I have a piece that is almost done, but I find a deal of trouble to finish it (1: 367).-__

5 "To Linnie" and "To Rosa" CWIII: 203-204; Don E. Fehrenbacher, compiler, "Gen. Lees invasion of the North written by himself," in *Abraham Lincoln Speeches and Writings 1859-1865*, 2 vols. (New York: Literary Classics of the United States, The Library of America, 1989), 480. This poem about Lee is Lincoln's last known poetic writing.

6 For a full treatment of Lincoln's poetry see Jason Emerson, "The Poetic Lincoln," *Lincoln Herald* 101, no. 1 (Spring, 1999): 4-12.

7 Meter is a pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables. Iambic meter is an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable. William Shakespeare's plays are written primarily in an iambic meter (in the example below the words are broken into syllables with a designating stressed syllables):

"Yon Ca' / ssius has' / a lean' / and hun' / gry look';

He thinks' / too much': / such men' / are dan' / ger ous'. " (Julius Caesar act 1, scene 2)

8 In the stanza of "Little Eddie" scanned here the lines are unrhythmic mixtures of iambs, trochees, and anapests; line five has an extra unaccented syllable beginning the line with the word "pure" (the metric term for such is anacrusis).

9 A rhyme scheme is an analysis of the pattern of rhymes within the poem; each line ending rhyme-sound is represented by a letter. For example:

To Rosa

You are young, and I am older a

You are hopeful, I am not b

Enjoy life, ere it grow colder a

Pluck the roses ere they rot b

Teach your beau to heed the lay C

That sunshine soon is lost in shade d

That now's as good as any day C

To take thee, Rosa, ere she fade. d

10 Baker, 126. Baker's discussion of Eddie's death is the most complete consideration of the subject in any Lincoln literature; for the entire section see pages 125-128.

11 This conjecture is offered most notably in Harry Pratt's article, which is the second most in-depth consideration of Eddie's death and the poem that followed the burial, next to Jean Baker's.

12 CW, 1:465.

13 Mary Lincoln to Abraham Lincoln, Lexington, May, 1848, Mary Lincoln, *Her Life and Letters*, ed. Justin G. Turner & Linda Levitt Turner (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), 37 (hereafter cited as *Letters*).

14 Mary Lincoln to Dr. James Smith, Marienbad, 8 June 1870, *Letters*, 567.

15 *ibid.*, 123; Katherine Helm, *Mary, Wife of Lincoln* (New York & London: Harper & Brothers Publishing, 1928), 227.

16 Joshua Speed, *Reminiscences of Abraham Lincoln and Notes on a Visit to California: Two Lectures* (Louisville KY. John P. Morgan and Company, 1884), 19.

17 CW, 1:382.

18 Mary Lincoln to Dr. James Smith, Marienbad, 8 June 1870, *Letters*, 567.

19 Helm, 117.

20 Sangamo Journal August 27, 1842; CW 1: 291-297, 300-301. These letters, a series of political satires of a Democratic office-holder begun anonymously by Lincoln and some of his fellow Whigs, culminated in the famous duel between Lincoln and James Shields. For the letters between Shields and Lincoln see CW 1: 89n, 291-297, 299-303; for a biographical treatment of these events see Albert J. Beveridge, *Abraham Lincoln 1809-1858*, 4 vols., (Boston & New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1928), 11: 37-57; 51n2.

21 Mary Lincoln to Mercy Ann Levering, Columbia, Mo., 23 July 1840, *Letters*, 16.

22 Octavia Roberts, *Lincoln in Illinois* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1918), 67. Unfortunately, Roberts does not identify the neighbor.

23 Ruth Painter Randall, *Mary Lincoln: Biography of a Marriage* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1953), 31; Helm, 32.

24 Sangamo Journal, 16 September 1842; also in Beveridge, 47.

Ye jews-harp awake! The ----- s won --

Rebecca the widow has gained Erin's son;

The pride of the north from the Emerald isle

Has been woo'd and won by a woman's sweet smile.

The combat's relinquished, old loves all forgot:

To the widow he's bound, Oh! bright be his lot!

In the smiles of the conquest so lately achieved.

Joyful be his bride, "widow's modesty" relieved,

The footsteps of time tread lightly on flowers

May the cares of this world ne'er darken their hours.

But the pleasures of life are fickle and coy

As the smiles of a maiden sent off to destroy.

Happy groom! in sadness far distant from thee

The Fair girls dream only of past times of glee

Enjoyed in thy presence; whilst the soft blarnied store

Will be fondly remembered as relics of yore,

And hands that in rapture you oft would have prest,

In prayer will be clasp'd that your lot may be blest.

Cathleen.

Obviously there is a great difference between this poem and the "Little Eddie" poem: the Cathleen poem is in rhyming couplets, "Little Eddie" has a rhyme scheme of abcbdd; the Cathleen poem has only one stanza, "Little Eddie" has four; and while the Cathleen poem does have a majority of anapestic meter, the meter is irregular and in some places downright clumsy, suggesting it was most likely achieved unintentionally. The styles of the two poems are similar in that they reflect the Romantic tendencies and diction of the time.

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